

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00512 061136Z

ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5921

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT SF UK

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA TAKES UMBRAGE AT REMARKS

OF BRITISH FOREIGN MINISTER OWEN

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPER DIE BURGER INTERVIEWED FON MIN PIK BOTHA TO OBTAIN HIS COMMENTS ON THE REMARKS ABOUT SOUTHERN AFRICA PROBLEMS MADE BY BRITISH FOREIGN MINISTER DR. DAVID OWEN ON A WEEK-END TELEVISION SHOW IN ENGLAND. BOTHA TAOK PRESSMEN THAT IF OWEN'S COMMENTS REPRESENTED THE REAL STARTING POINT AND HIS PERSONAL OPINIONS, THEN BOTHA WOULD AGREE THAT THE CHANCES OF ATTAINING ANY SUCCESS IN THE COURSE OF OWEN'S FORTHCOMING TRIP TO AFRICA WERE INDEED SLENDER.

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PAGE 02 CAPE T 00512 061136Z

2. BOTHA IS QUOTED AS SAYING "IT AMAZES ME THAT DR. OWEN BY IMPLICATION AND IN ADVANCE PLACES THE BLAME FOR THE RHODESIAN DEADLOCK ON MR. SMITH. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE CONSTRUCTIVE IF DR. OWEN COULD HAVE INDICATED WHOM HE REGARDED AS THE SPOKESMAN OF THE BLACK MAJORITY IN RHODESIA. THE KERNEL OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT THERE IS REALLY NO CLARITY OVER WHO REPRESENTS THE BLACK MAJORITY.

IT IS A PITY THAT DR. OWEN DOES NOT SEE THAT." BOTHA COMMENTED THAT HE HOPED OWEN WOULD EQUIP HIMSELF MORE THOROUGHLY WITH WHAT THE REAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA BEFORE HIS VISIT.

3. BOTHA REPORTEDLY SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED TO LEARN THAT DR. OWEN HAD REPEATED GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA. SAG HAD NEVER CLAIMED THAT THE DANGER OF COMMUNISM WAS THE REASON FOR SUPPRESSION OF BLACKS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE TRANSKEI WAS PROOF OF SAG WILLINGNESS TO GIVE BLACK NATIONS THEIR FREEDOM REGARDLESS OF THE RISKS. OWEN'S COMPARISON OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE US SHOWED, ACCORDING TO BOTHA, OWEN'S LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORICAL REALITIES. "WE DID NOT MEET THE BLACKS AS SLAVES, OR IMPORT THEM. WE DID NOT CONQUER AND GOVERN THEM AS UPROOTED PEOPLE, WE MET THEM AS LIVING ORGANIC ENTITIES FUNCTIONING AS NATIONS." BOTHA NOTED THAT WHITES HAD AS MUCH RIGHT AS BLACKS TO GOVERN THEMSELVES. "WE DO NOT WANT TO RULE OVER BLACK PEOPLE. IT IS THE KEYSTONE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO END WHITE RULE OVER BLACK NATIONS, BUT THE WORLD I KNOW DOESN'T ASK THIS. IT ASKS FOR THE END OF THE WHITE MAN'S RIGHT TO GOVERN HIMSELF.....DR. OWEN OUGHT TO KNOW THAT WORLD OPINION WOULD ONLY BE SATISFIED IF WE CAPITULATE COMPLETELY. THE CHANGES WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND WHICH WILL STILL BE MADE WILL COME BECAUSE SOUTH AFRICA BELIEVES THEY ARE RIGHT AND NECESSARY." END UNLCASSIFIED.

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PAGE 03 CAPE T 00512 061136Z

4. COMMENT. WE DO NOT HAVE TRANSCRIPT, BUT IN EARLIEST TREATMENT GIVEN OWEN REMARKS, SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING ANALYSTS SEEM TO HAVE LIFTED ONLY THAT PART INDICATING THAT WHILE RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA WERE STRONG CASES FOR HAVING MAJORITY RULE QUICKLY, SOUTH AFRICA WAS A DIFFERENT CASE: THE WHITE POPULATION WAS MUCH LARGER AND HAD A GREATER HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT. HE OPPOSED ECONOMIC ISOLATION OF SOUTH AFRICA. EARLY SABC COMMENTARY WAS TO THE EFFECT THAT OWEN DISPLAYED A MORE REALISTIC APPRECIATION (BY INFERENCE IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER WESTERN NATIONS) OF THE REAL SITUATION HERE. BOTHA'S RIPOSTE REFLECTED A DEEPER APPRECIATION OF THE FINE PRINT OF WHAT OWEN HAD SAID. OWEN REPORTEDLY COMMENTED THAT RHODESIAN PRIME MINISTER SMITH WAS NOT THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD DELIVER A SETTLEMENT, AND MIGHT EVEN BE BY-PASSED COMPLETELY. THE LARGE BLACK MAJORITY HAD TO BE CONSIDERED. ON SOUTH AFRICA, OWEN OBSERVED THAT IT APPEARED TO HAVE MADE NO MAJOR ACCOMMODATION IN ITS POLICIES. "IF THEY DON'T SEE THAT (THE NEED FOR MAJOR CHANGES) THERE WILL BE AN

INEVITABLE CLASH AND IT WILL BE VERY UGLY.....YOU CANNOT FIGHT THE PROBLEM OF RACIALISM BY PRETENDING IT IS ALL COMMUNISTIC." ELSEWHERE, OWEN HAD COMPARED SOUTH AFRICA'S RACIAL PROBLEMS TO THOSE FACED EARLIER IN THE UNITED STATES. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE IN VORSTER'S INTERESTS TO TRY TO MODERATE SAG INTERNAL POLICIES.

5. ONE VERY WELL INFORMED PRESSMAN COMMENTED THAT OTHA HAD PROBABLY FELT CONSTRAINED TO SPEAK SHARPLY IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HE MUST WAGE IN THE WESTDENE CONSTITUENCY, A SUBURB OF JOHANNESBURG. (BOTH A MUST BE ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT TO RETAIN HIS MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIO.) HIS ONLY OPPOSITION IN THE RACE WILL BE FROM THE ULTRA CONSERVATIVE HERSTIGTE NASIONALE PARTY (HNP), THE PROG-REFS HAVING DECIDED NOT TO CONTEST THE SEAT. THE VOTE THEREFORE WILL BE A TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN FACTIONS OF AFRIKANERSDOM. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO DOUBT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 CAPE T 00512 061136Z

THAT BOTH A WILL WIN, THERE IS MUCH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THAT AREA AND THE HNP WILL LOOK FOR ALL POSSIBLE WAYS TO TURN THIS ISSUE TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. AS ALWAYS, THE NATIONAL PARTY FEELS OBLIGED TO WIN BY AN EVEN LARGER MARGIN THAN BEFORE, LEST THERE BE SOME IMPLICATION THAT ITS POPULARITY MIGHT BE SLIPPING.BOWDLER

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